



Session 9: Referencing NQF South Africa to ACQF
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Strategic Policies on Framing SA Referencing Imperative



**African Continental
Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**



**CONTINENTAL
EDUCATION STRATEGY
FOR AFRICA**
2016 – 2025

Strategic Policies on Framing SA Referencing Imperative

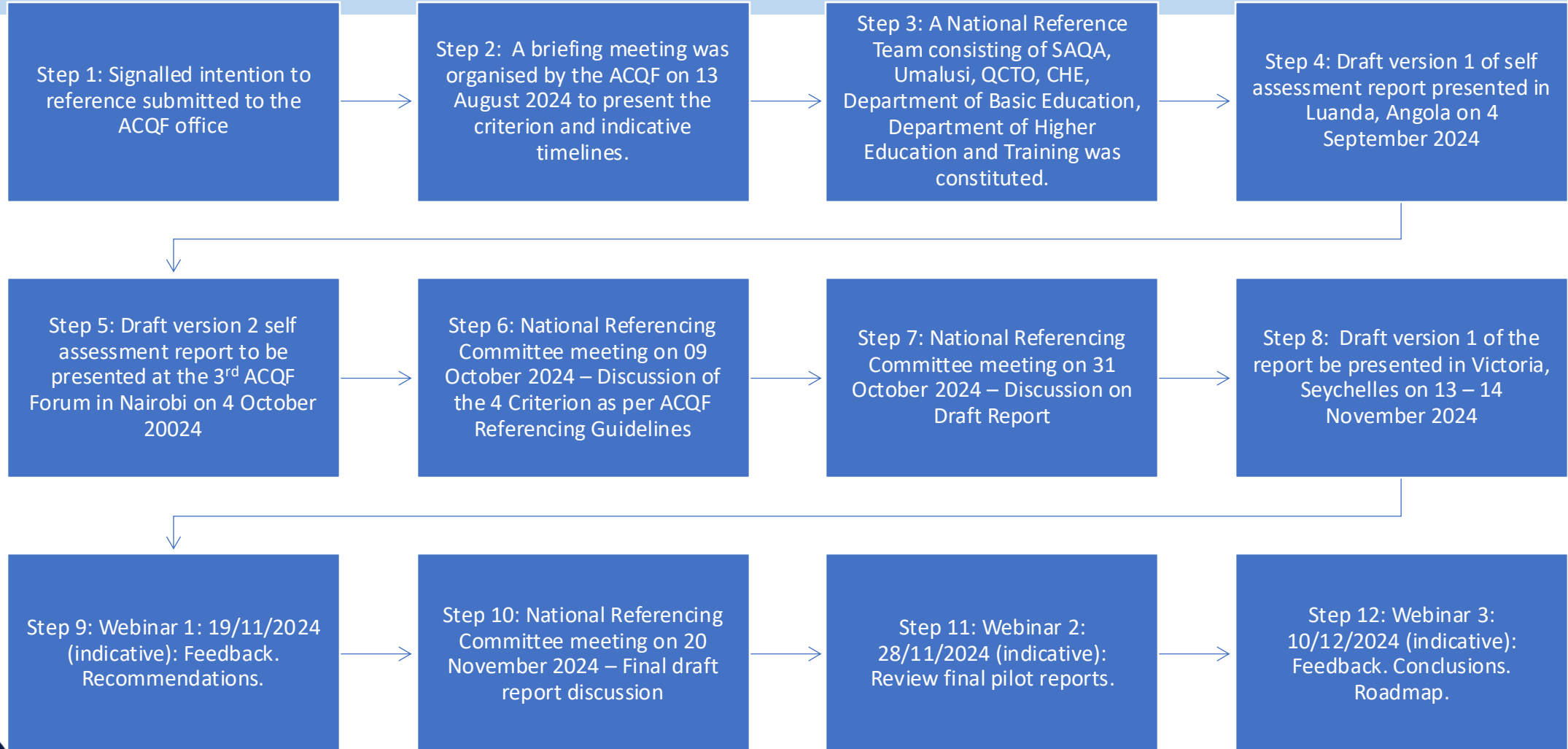
Regional and Global Conventions (e.g. Addis Convention)

Bilateral Agreements (including: MoA's and MoU's)

Mutual Recognition of Qualification Agreements

Institutional Agreements

Referencing Process



Criterion 1: Level Descriptors

National Qualifications Framework



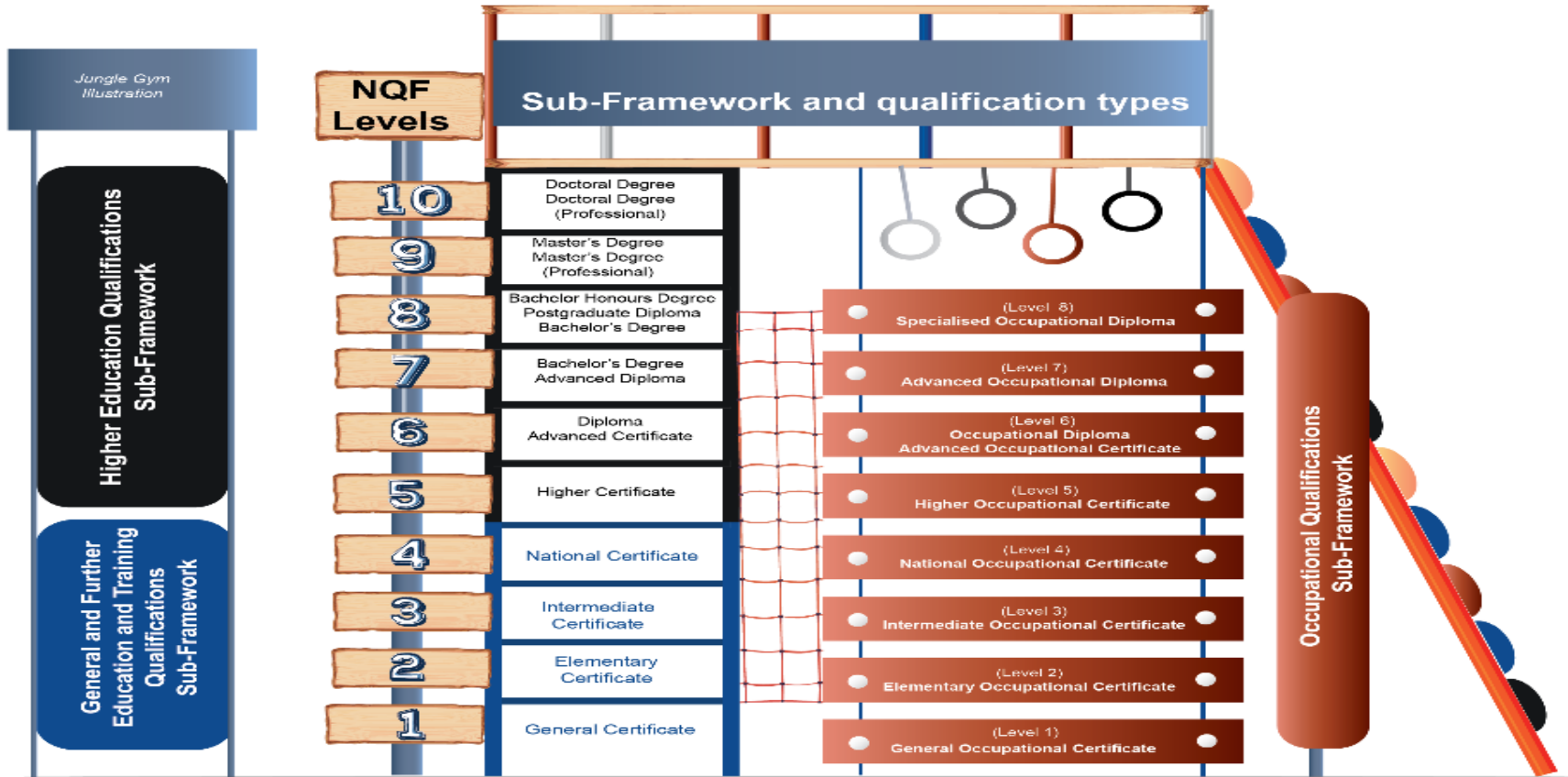
Council on Higher Education (CHE): CHE oversees qualifications from NQF level 5 to NQF level 10.



Quality Council for Trades and Occupation (QCTO): Accredits providers to offer trade related qualifications such as the N4 to N6 Diplomas. It has also delegated the accrediting authority to the SETAs who offer qualifications and part qualifications registered on NQF level 1 to 8 of the NQF.



Umalusi: Accredits private providers of education and training as well as private assessment bodies to offer tuition and/or assessment for qualification(s) on the General and Further Education and Training (GET) Qualification Framework for qualifications registered on NQF level 1- 4 Umalusi accredits institutions such as independent schools/private schools, private colleges (former private FET colleges and private adult learning centres).



Criterion 1: SA NQF Level Descriptors

Level	Competency
Level 5	Scope of Knowledge: demonstrate an informed understanding of the core areas of one or more fields/disciplines/ practices, and an informed understanding of the key terms, concepts, facts, general principles, rules and theories of that field/ discipline/ practice
	Knowledge Literacy: demonstrate an awareness of how knowledge or a knowledge system develops and evolves within the area of study/ operation
	Method and procedure: select and apply standard methods, procedures or techniques within the field/ discipline/ practice; and plan and manage an implementation process within a well-defined, familiar and supported environment
	Problem Solving: identify, evaluate and solve defined, routine and new problems within a familiar context; and Apply solutions based on relevant evidence and procedures or other forms of explanation appropriate to the field/ discipline/ practice demonstrating an understanding of the consequences
	Ethics and professional practice: take account of, and act in accordance with prescribed organisational and professional ethical codes of conduct, values, and practices; and Seek guidance on ethical and professional issues where necessary
	Assessing, processing managing information: gather information from a range of sources, including oral, written or symbolic texts, select information appropriate to the task; and apply basic processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation on that information
	Producing and communicating of information: communicate information reliably, accurately and coherently, using conventions appropriate to the context, in written and oral or signed form or in practical demonstration including an understanding of and respect for conventions around intellectual property, copyright and plagiarism, including associated legal implications
	Context and systems: operate in a range of familiar and new contexts, demonstrating an understanding of different kinds of systems, their constituent parts and the relationships between these parts; Understand how actions in one area impact on other areas within the same system
	Management of learning: evaluate his/ her performance or the performance of others and take appropriate action where necessary; Take responsibility for his/her learning within a structured learning process and promote the learning of others
	Accountability: account for his/her actions to work effectively with and respect others; In a defined context, take supervisory responsibility for others and for the responsible use of resources where appropriate

Criterion 1: ACQF Level Descriptors

	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and responsibility
Level 5	Mainly technical or theoretical knowledge with substantial depth in a discipline/area	A range of well-developed technical skills, with some specialisation, required to analyse information and new ideas, construct and communicate a coherent argument, and apply a range of solutions, often in combination, to address unfamiliar problems	Unpredictable contexts with full autonomy and full responsibility for self and group outcomes, and some responsibility for others



Criterion 2: Learning Outcomes

The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is fundamentally a learning outcomes-based framework

designed to ensure that qualifications across all levels of the three sub-frameworks are consistent, transparent, and aligned with the country's educational objectives.

Quality and consistency across the education and training system.

Focuses on what learners should know and be able to do at each level

Greater flexibility and mobility within the education system.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL), allowing individuals to gain formal recognition for skills and knowledge acquired through work experience or informal learning.

Criterion 2: Learning Outcomes

SA NQF definition of Learning Outcomes

The contextually **demonstrated end-products** of **specific learning processes**, which include **knowledge, skills and values**

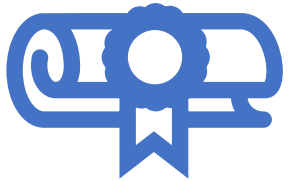
<https://www.saga.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SAQA-NQFpedia-Version-3.pdf>

ACQF Definition of Learning Outcomes

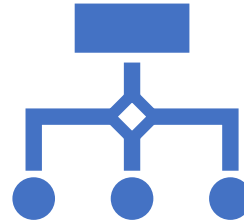
Learning outcomes indicate **what a learner should know, understand** and do after a process of learning.

https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-1-learning-outcomes-in-the-context-of-qualifications-frameworks-and-systems/acqf-guideline-1-learning-outcomes-in-the-context-of-qualifications-frameworks-and-systems-english-version/@@display-file/file/Guideline%201_Learning%20outcomes_04May2022_FINAL_WEB.pdf

Criterion 2: Recognition of Prior Learning



National Policy for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)



The policy focuses on two different purposes and processes for RPL and they are:

RPL for access: To provide an alternative access route into a programme of learning, professional designation, employment and career progression; and

RPL for credit: To provide for the awarding of credits for, or towards, a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.

CRITERION 2: RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

RPL in SA NQF Context

Providing alternative access route into a programme of learning, professional designation, employment and career progression; and awarding of credits for, or towards, a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF

RPL in ACQF Context

RPL and validation of learning outcomes from experience, for purposes of further study, employment, and acquisition of a full or part qualification. The ACQF supports quality and accessible RPL, as a key component of lifelong learning policies and a mechanism for equity and social inclusion

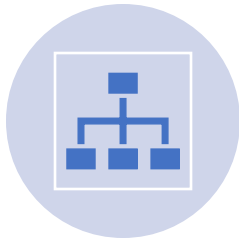
CRITERION 2: *Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT): SA NQF*



Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)



Articulation between qualifications both within and between the three Sub-Frameworks of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)



Outlines the guiding principles of the CAT system



One credit = ten notional hours



Credit Accumulation:
Learners can accumulate credits as they complete each component (module, unit) of a qualification



Credit Transfer allows learners to move between qualifications or institutions ((and up to a maximum of 50% in the higher education sector)

CRITERION 2: *Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)*

Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT): SA NQF	Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT): ACQF
Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), 2021	Key principles of CATS EN TM4 Validation and Recognition of Learning WEB.pdf (acqf.africa)
The credit system of one credit = ten notional hours	Promotes credit system
Credit Accumulation, learners accumulate credits as they complete each component (module, unit) of a qualification	The ACQF supports credit transfer and credit accumulation and transfer systems in different academic and vocational pathways

CRITERION 3 (TRANSPARENT PROCEDURES FOR INCLUSION OF QUALIFICATIONS IN THE NQF, REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS)

SA NQF

ACQF

Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as amended in 2022

<https://www.saqqa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Policy-and-Criteria-for-the-Registration-of-Qualifications-and-Part-qualifications-Amended-2022-1.pdf>

A qualification or part-qualification is developed by an education institution, industry body, or professional association. The qualification must adhere to national standards for education and training and be aligned with the NQF's levels and learning outcomes

A searchable register of qualifications is available on the SAQA website at

[SAQA](#)

ACQF policy document underscores the promotion of transparent procedures

Policy documents states that “Qualifications described in terms of learning outcomes will strengthen transparency of learning and trust in qualifications and their outcomes and benefit the country stakeholders as well as those outside the country who are interested in understanding the qualification systems of a given country”

Development of QCP

CRITERION 4: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality Assurance: SA NQF

A clear role of SA and the Quality Councils are clearly defined in the NQF Act No 67 of 2008 (and the NQF Amendment Act no 12 of 2019)

[National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 | South African Government \(www.gov.za\)](#)

[National Qualifications Framework Amendment Act 12 of 2019 \(www.gov.za\)](#)

National Learner Records Database

Register of Qualifications

Quality Assurance: ACQF

Addresses the qualifications quality chain, from design of standards underpinning qualifications to learning, assessment, and certification;

Provides transparent information-sharing on results of evaluation

Criterion 1: Level Descriptors (Preliminary Comparison Outcome)

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Level Descriptors	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the ACQF.

- SA Level Descriptors has 10 Domains
- ACQF has 3 Domains – Knowledge, skills and autonomy and responsibility
- Difficulty to measure with the difference in number of domains
- There are similarities in descriptions (semantics) of knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility
- However: the difference in the number of domains

Criterion 2: Learning Outcomes(Preliminary Comparison Outcome)

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Learning Outcomes, RPL and Credit Systems	The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems

- Similar in:
 - Promotion of learning outcomes in foundation of the frameworks
 - Promotion of learning outcomes in policy documents and expectations in the design of programmes
 - Definition of learning outcomes
- No substantive differences

Criterion 2: RPL (Preliminary Comparison Outcome)

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Learning Outcomes, RPL and Credit Systems	The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems

- Similar in:
 - Promotion of recognition of different learning pathways
 - Different access routes
 - Employment and career progression
- No substantive differences

Criterion 2: Credit Systems (Preliminary Comparison Outcome)

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Learning Outcomes, RPL and Credit Systems	The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems

- Similar in:
 - Using credit system
 - Promotion and policies around use and value of credit systems
 - Mobility of students (programme and institutional)
- No substantive differences

Criterion 3: Transparent Procedures for Inclusion of Qualifications in the NQF, Register Of Qualifications(Preliminary Comparison Outcome)

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Transparency in inclusion of qualifications	There are transparent processes and procedures for including qualifications in the NQF or for describing the place of qualifications in the NQS and information on qualifications is accessible, trustworthy and verifiable in a national register(s) of qualifications .

- Similar in:
 - Well established websites with all services listed.
 - SAQA has Digital customer interface and the register of qualifications is available as an online, searchable database with filters for sub-frameworks, sectors, levels etc.
 - National Learner Records Database – Digitised - data validation tool
 - QCP in the case of ACQF
 - Recognition of professional bodies and the registration of professional designations (digital register with searchable database of professional bodies and professional designations already in place)
- No substantive differences

Criterion 4: Quality Assurance (Preliminary Comparison Outcome)

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Quality Assurance System	The national quality assurance system for education and training refers to the national qualifications framework or system and is consistent with the principles of quality assurance of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

- Similar in:
 - Qualifications quality chain or system
 - Clear role definitions in legislation or policies

- No substantive differences



Conclusions

- Comparability of the SA NQF and ACQF
- SA reviewing level descriptors
- Importance of comparability with ACQF: supporting education and work mobility across borders.
- Enhanced Qualification Portability: supports the African Union's Agenda 2063 by encouraging skill-sharing and economic integration

Preliminary Recommendations

- Strengthening the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Referencing process
- Promote stakeholder engagement – importance of the role of the NQF partners – allocation of time.
- Increase awareness: students, employers, and institutions to understand and utilize the benefits of NQF comparison with ACQF, including documentation on qualification portability and application processes.
- Periodic review and update: reflection on global trends e.g. digital, microcredentials, green skills



**THANK
YOU**

